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# THE LEGEND OF LAI- CHOW

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# THE LEGEND OF LAI-CHOW



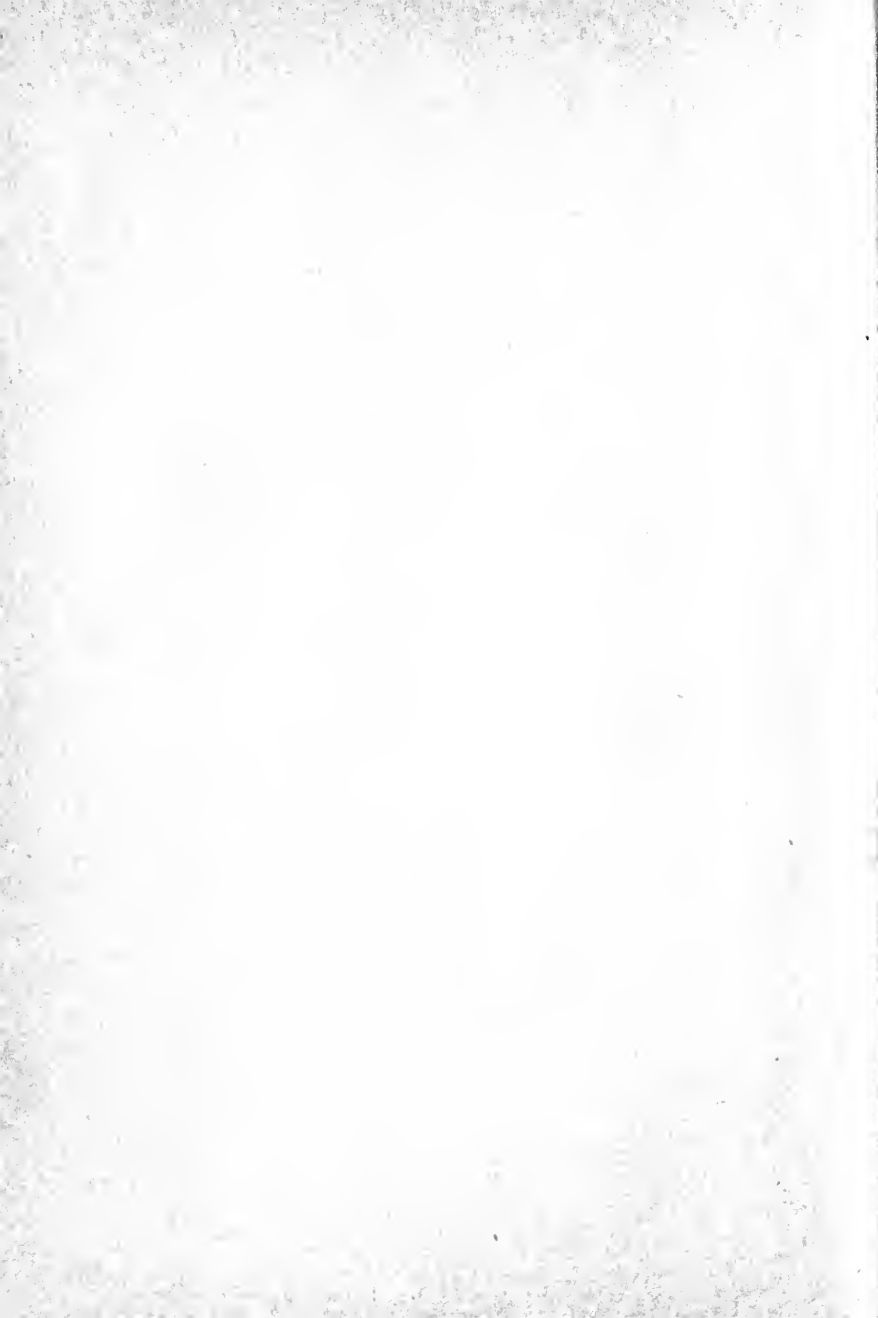
Image of Dru-law-yieh

# THE LEGEND OF LAI-CHOW

BY  
ANNIE B. GAY GASTON

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*Artist of Lai-chow*

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DEDICATED  
TO  
MY MOTHER



## FOREWORD

**D**URING seven years' residence at Lai-chow, in the province of Shantung, North China, I often heard The Legend of Lai-chow told by Chinese preachers and Bible women, in their native tongue, as an illustration of Christ's giving his life a ransom for His people. I wrote the story out in English prose, but was persuaded by friends that its metrical quality justified publication in the present form.

My work in China is interpreting to the Chinese the love of God and of American Christianity, through hospital service.

My hope is that this story of unselfish devotion to duty on the part of a Chinese, will show to the Western World the high qualities and noble characteristics which are to be found in this ancient people.

MRS. JAMES M'FADDEN GASTON.



## THE LEGEND OF LAI-CHOW

WOULD you hear an old, old story  
From the lore of far Shantung-land?

Ere the <sup>1</sup>Manchu ruled in China—  
Late the <sup>2</sup>Mings were come to Peking—  
From the North there came rude Red Beards,  
Wielding mighty sabre handles.

Stemming tide and wind and water,  
Their rough barges brought them onward  
Till they dropt their iron anchors,  
By the shores of old Dung-jo.

What their errand? what their mission?  
Only gain of gold would sate them;  
Given this, they wanted naught else,  
And would pass, with blade still sheathèd.

<sup>1</sup> *Manchu*—The last dynasty ruling in China, 1644–1912.

<sup>2</sup> *Ming*—Dynasty preceding the Manchu, 1368–1644.

## The Legend of Lai-chow

---

Then quick flew the word of warning;  
Straight the city merchants gathered,  
Piled their gold up high before them,  
Saying, "Take this, leave us peaceful."

Now the man who led the warriors  
Was called Kong, from childhood, "Yio Dei."  
Naught of fear or faltering knew he,  
And his soldiers followed, faithful.  
Satisfied with gold they came on,  
And old Dung-jo breathed more freely,  
Offered up her fires of incense,  
And returned to peace and quiet.

Coming over rugged mountains,  
Camping by an humble village,  
Here there happened that dread something  
Which wrought lasting woe and sorrow.

Fowl meat for a soldier's supper,—  
What a small thing, what a trifle!  
But it was a stolen chicken,  
Aye, it was the <sup>1</sup>Gwan's own pullet.

<sup>1</sup>Gwan—Magistrate.





"Stemming tide and wind and water,  
Their rough barges brought them onward."



## The Legend of Lai-chow

---

So the Gwan said, "Blood there must be,"  
And brave Kong said, "Ay, it must be."  
Not for strife he-made this journey,  
Only for the lure of money,  
Taking large things, loads of lucre,  
Not a small thing like a chicken.

He who did the petty looting  
Must give life in forfeit for it;  
So 'twas ruled, and so 'twas given—  
Still the Gwan was not appeased.

Mighty Kong must come before him,  
Bow to earth and beg his pardon,  
And his soldiers with him, likewise,  
All must 'eat this bitter business.'

Thus they did, but sorely suffered,—  
Filthy water in their faces,  
Flung by women of the <sup>1</sup>Yahmen!—  
"Now indeed," they vowed, "this endeth  
The amends that we shall make him."

<sup>1</sup>Yahmen—Court.

## The Legend of Lai-chow

Fierce they quarreled, and the life blood  
Of great Kong himself must pay them,  
If he led them not to conquer  
All these petty Gwans before them.

What else could he?—So 'twas settled  
To the <sup>1</sup>Foo-town he must lead them,  
There redress of wrong to win them.  
So they traveled, and they traveled,  
Till they reached the court town Lai-chow.  
Walled about she stood before them,  
Strong to battle, hard to conquer,  
Holding here a court of justice  
For the laws of Lai-chow-fu-land.

Then great Kong bethought him quickly,  
“Here a friend I have, old Dru-yieh;  
We together were in childhood,  
He will help me now to settle  
This most trying situation.

“He the Gwan here, ruling wisely,  
Father of a quiet people,

<sup>1</sup> *Foo*—Prefectural.

## The Legend of Lai-chow

---

He will help me quell the spirit  
Of my angry Red Beard Soldiers."

Out came Dru-yieh prompt to meet him,  
Followed by his 'yah-ye troopers,  
Quick to offer eastern welcome  
To the guests from northland coming.

In the Yahmen courtyard crowding,  
Soon was spread a Foo-Gwan's feast,  
Plenty for the gallant captain,  
Plenty for his band of followers.

Long they, friendly, talked together,  
Drank their wine and ate their 'good food,'  
Till the purpose of this coming  
Must at last be set forth plainly.

"For an insult by the roadside  
My bold men must have their redress,  
Naught but <sup>2</sup>kahtow from your city  
Will suffice," said Kong the mighty.

<sup>1</sup> *Yah-ye*—Court-followers.

<sup>2</sup> *Kahtow*—Chinese obeisance.

## **The Legend of Lai-chow**

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Then said Dru-yieh, "Back to Dung-jo  
You should lead your angry soldiers;  
You were near to that Foo city,  
And were far away from Lai-chow  
When the insult foul was given."

(Now old Dru-yieh well remembered  
How this village under question  
Oft made trouble on the border.  
Standing near the line of boundary  
'Twixt his district and the Dung-jo,  
Many a problem had arisen  
As to court of justice proper  
For the settling of its quarrels,  
For the meting out of justice  
To the simple country people.)

"Good," said Kong Yio, very willing  
To ward off the evil business  
From his friend and former playmate.  
"Good," his men said. They remembered  
Gold in plenty at old Dung-jo;  
So they traveled, and they traveled  
All the way to ancient Dung-jo.

## The Legend of Lai-chow

---

Quick bethought him wise old Dru-yieh,  
"They are gone, but they will come back;  
I must ready be to meet them;  
I must save my city's children."

Swift the couriers flew to Peking;  
Horse on horse relaying hourly,  
Man to man transmitting message,  
From a sundown to a sundown,  
Weary li they rode a thousand.

Back the message from the <sup>1</sup>Hwang-shang:  
"I've no soldiers for your city.  
Use your wits and save your people  
From this band of northern robbers."

Then great Dru-yieh sore was troubled;  
Well he knew the matter vexing  
Ne'er in Dung-jo would be settled.  
Well he knew their second coming  
Would be hot in wrath upon him  
For the trick that he had played them.

<sup>1</sup> Emperor.

## The Legend of Lai-chow

Up he called the city's people,  
Told them straight the situation,  
Said 'twas vain to stand against them—  
Those same men of wrath and anger,  
Naught but his own blood would answer.

Bitter wailed his people round him;  
Well they loved him, loth to lose him.  
Eager sought some other measure,  
For the saving of their lives.

Strong they fortified the city,  
Mending wall in every crevice,  
Mounting guns on every turret,  
Waiting for the host returning.

'Twas late spring-time when they saw them,  
Marching down the road from Whang-shien.  
More their number; mightier were they;  
And their hearts were full of blood-shed,  
For the trick that had been played them.

Fair the country was, and fertile,  
Full of bloom and cherry blossom,



## **The Legend of Lai-chow**

---

Wheat fields stretching, stretching smoothly,  
Like the swelling of the ocean.

And the villages among them  
Spoke of quiet peace and plenty,  
Not of hard and minted money,  
But of gold that grows from sunshine,  
With the jewels of the morning,  
And the pearls of eventide.

Round the city lay the great moat,  
Dry in spring-time, full in summer.  
'Twere a deadly dare to cross it  
When the wall was manned so strongly.

By the city's deep, cool shadow,  
Lay the lotus ponds in stillness.  
There the blossoms fair and pink-lipped—  
See them, shell-shaped, golden-hearted,  
Standing thus in queen-like beauty,  
Tall and glorious, chaste and noble,  
With a court of buds, a-bending,  
Blushing, curtsying, all around them.  
At their feet the broad, green leaf trays,  
As if waiting there to serve them.

## **The Legend of Lai-chow**

---

Would that we, O lotus flowers,  
Might once catch and keep forever  
All the myth and all the mystery,  
All the eastern charm and glory,  
That your beauty and your fragrance  
Have been shedding down the ages.  
In this ancient land of China,  
Here where man has long forgotten  
And forsaken his Creator,  
Bowing down in sinful worship,  
Year by year you've come back always,  
In the golden summer sunshine,  
And have beckoned and have lifted,  
Yet a little toward the blue,  
Toward the Heavenly Father's mercy,  
Toward all purity and goodness.

Hushed the sounds of home and farm-side,  
For a scourge was on the people,  
Scourge of war, with siege impending,  
And no aid from outside coming.

Some took refuge in the city;  
Some from city flew to village;



City Wall and Lotus Ponds of Lai-chow



## The Legend of Lai-chow

Many scattered to the mountains,  
There in caves to hide away.

Five long months they thus were harassed;  
Summer heat and sickness slew them,  
Crops were ruined, cattle famished,  
And the end was near to see.

Sadly sat the good old Dru-yieh,  
In his Yah-men court secluded,  
Thinking, thinking, ever thinking,  
Of the end that was to be.

Of his people—yea, he loved them,  
Through these tortured months of waiting  
They had closer drawn unto him,  
They had proved their simple trusting.

Of his boy—ah! there the hurt was;  
In his old age this one only  
Had been given to build his hope on,  
This his heart's great pride and treasure.

## **The Legend of Lai-chow**

---

Now to leave him and his mother  
Far from home and unprotected,  
Or to see them, helpless, suffer  
At the hands of cruel robbers!

She, a lady gently nurtured  
In a sunny southern province,  
He, a boy of thirteen summers,  
Lithe of form, with black eyes piercing,  
Learning, ever learning, wisdom  
Far beyond his tale of years.

Soft a step unto him coming—  
And a Yah-ye down before him,  
Prone upon the ground, uplifted  
Letters, from the outside, sent in.

"This must end," great Kong had written.  
"Longer now I cannot hold them.  
Seventh day of seventh moon this;  
All this business must be finished.  
Either your blood, or the people's."

## The Legend of Lai-chow

"Mine," old Dru-yieh cried, upstarting,  
"Mine shall be the ransom given,  
Of my people and my boy.

"Call my penman, call him quickly.—  
Ah! sit here, and straitly write them:  
'Price of peace shall now be paid you.  
When the temple bell is ringing  
For the third hour after midnight,  
At the south gate, on the wall top,  
Watch for men with ropes of hemp-weed.  
There we'll pay the city's ransom—  
Only you must straitly bind you,  
That, the price once fully given,  
Hair of head, nor little finger  
Of my people shall be wounded.' "

Straight the message, quick the answer,  
Swearing by departed spirits,  
Not to harm the city's people,  
When the ransom had been paid.

Now good Dru-yieh must make ready:  
Calling out a trusted yah-ye,

## **The Legend of Lai-chow**

---

"When the morning comes," he faltered,  
"I shall not be here to tell you  
All that I would have you tell him—  
Him in yonder room a-sleeping."

Long they talked, the servant weeping,—  
Past the first bell and the second.  
Then old Dru-yieh, slowly stooping,  
Passed within the doorway, bending  
By the kong where lay his Tong-lin,  
Sleeping—moonbeams all about him.

"I am robbing him of father,"  
Said the old man, "but I give him,  
What is better, life and loving,  
And a spotless, noble lineage,  
And a deed of simple duty  
As a model for his living."

Out he went and called his yah-ye,  
"Come, my men, there's work to do now.  
Bring your ropes of hemp-weed twisted—  
Follow wheresoe'er I lead you."



## The Legend of Lai-chow

Through the quiet street, deserted  
By a people crushed and hopeless,  
To the south gate straight he led them,  
Up the long stairway he led them,  
Step by step, unfaltering, dauntless,  
Till they reached the top and waited,  
Breath to gain, and looked about them.

At their feet the robbers gathered,  
Waiting like a flock of vultures,  
Black, uncanny, full of hatred,  
Moving in and out the shadows.

Out across the plains and mountains  
Lay the moonlight, bright as daytime,  
And the moon looked down amazed  
At this deed of love and hatred.

Then good Dru-yieh took the rope-ends,  
Tied them round his waist and arm-pits,  
While his men began to question,  
“What?” and “Why thus?” “No,—we will  
not.”

But he hushed them—“Steady now, men;

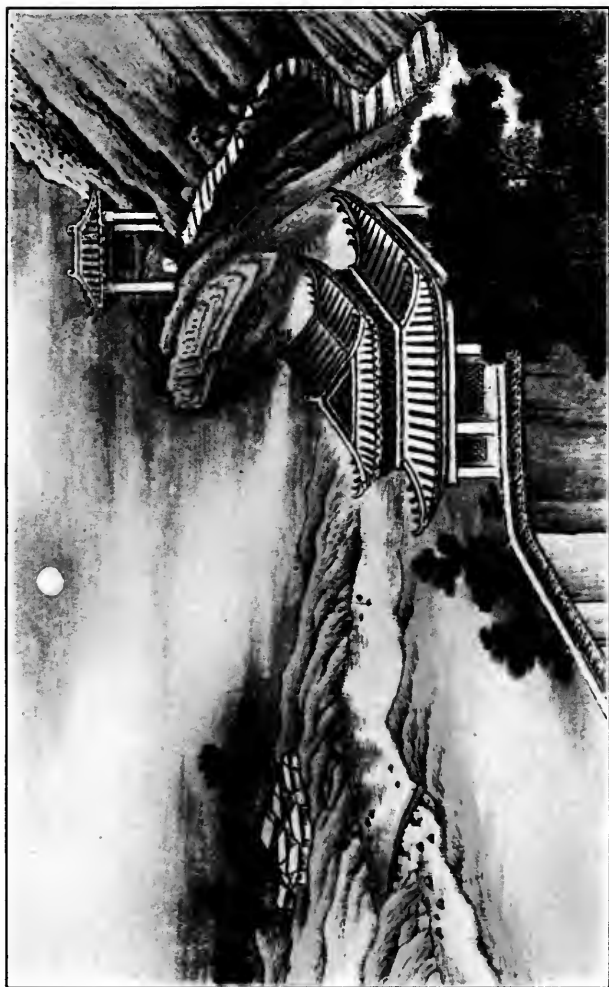
## **The Legend of Lai-chow**

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Brace your feet within the rock-cleft;  
Wait!—the bell—it soon must call us  
All to worship for the full moon—  
Worship now for Earth and Heaven.”

Softly, quivering down the mountains,  
Came the first stroke and the second.—  
Ah! what alchemy could make it?  
Where the wizard that could mold it?  
Whose the soul outspeaking through it?  
Moan of wood doves, song of south wind,  
Lovers' sighs and maidens' singing,  
All are melted and are mingled  
In the bells of Daw-seh-goo.

When were made these bronze bells, ancient?  
“When? Who knows?” the dullard answers;  
But a scholar, turning backward  
On the yellow page of time,  
Runs his finger on the margin:  
“ ’Twas when Mau-Gwei ruled, the bloody,  
Sending here to slay our strong men,  
Till from out all Lai-chow-fu-land,  
Only seven names were left.



"Softly, quivering down the mountains,  
Came the first stroke and the second."



## The Legend of Lai-chow

---

"Long before proud Jung-tzu, Hwang-shang,  
Up from Nanking came to Peking,  
There to set his court in power,  
There to rule the Middle Kingdom.' "

Hai! These names, all strange, unmeaning,  
Tell us not the thing we asked you;  
Count the years and we can measure  
By some other date familiar.

"Years? Ay, by the years you may know;  
All the months and all the moon feasts  
Of the centuries down enfolding  
Have been added, and are adding,  
To the <sup>2</sup>*lai-li* of our land  
By the bronzed bells yonder hanging."

So we measure back in history.  
'Twas before the New World opened,  
E'en before the Crusade marches;  
Was't when Alfred blessed the Briton?  
Was it then this bell was fashioned?

<sup>2</sup> *Lai-li*—History.

## The Legend of Lai-chow

"Hai! man, even *then* 'twas ancient;  
For the temple then a-building,  
It was brought from some far temple,  
And its date, by Time's hard finger,  
Has been worn beyond restoring."

So our quest is still unfruitful,  
And our question yet unanswered.

But the bells have ceased a-ringing.  
As their last sob trembled downward,  
Quick the move and hard the breathing,  
As the men resisted, striving  
To keep back the work of love.

Shut your eyes, you would not see it,—  
Not that deadly deed of hatred.  
Slack the rope is—ay, 'tis lightened—  
Back they draw it to the turret—  
Stand aghast to see it carries  
The right arm of Dru-law-yieh!

Sickening, see, the pale moon shivers,  
Draws a cloud across her white face,

## The Legend of Lai-chow

From the sight she would not witness,  
From the fiendish deed then done.

Day-light dawns; the moon, down slipping,  
Slumbers in the western sea.

Murderers now, the deed accomplished,  
All have scattered, fled for Dung-jò,  
To take shipping for the northland,  
There to hide their darksome crime.

Wide the city gates flew open;  
Men out-hasting to their home towns,  
In poured crowds of curious gazers:  
Trade, upspringing, cried its bread-stuffs.  
Now was feeding for the hungry;  
Now was courage for the faint-heart.  
Siege days over, hope of living  
Sprang again in every bosom.

But the thing that sorely grieved them  
Was the loss of brave old Dru-yieh.  
He for them had paid the ransom.  
Given his life to buy them living.

## The Legend of Lai-chow

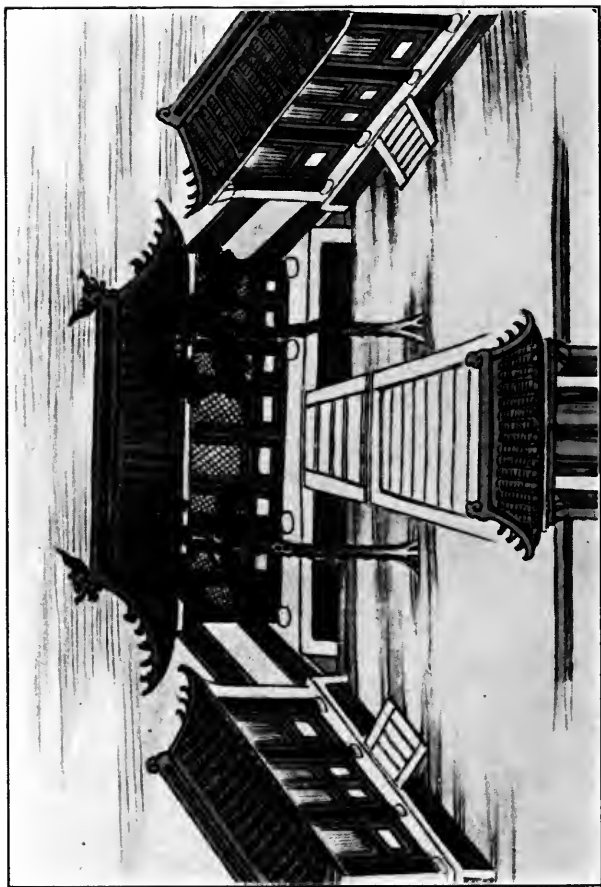
Straight the men of Lai-chow gathered,  
Sent a message to the palace,  
To the king in Peking dwelling,  
Telling of the deed of love.

"Now we have no City Father—  
Send us, pray we, one to rule us,  
One to love us like our Dru-yieh."

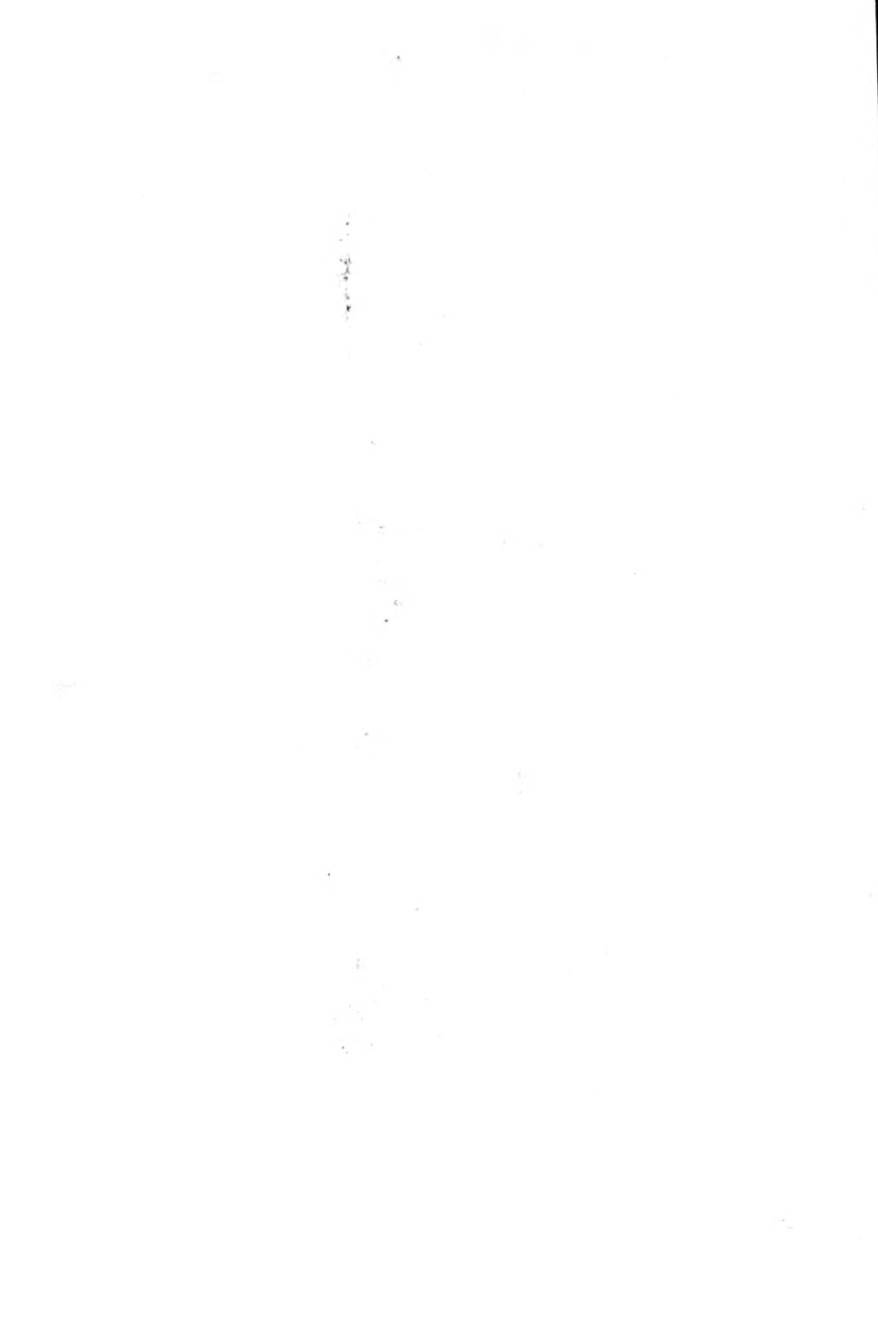
Back the answer: "Such I have not,  
But a Foo-Gwan I will send you.  
He has orders first to honor  
Him who went before him, Dru-yieh.  
Build a temple, make an image—  
For its arm, the arm of Dru-yieh,  
E'en the arm that saved your city.  
And adown the ages running,  
Tell your children, tell them always,  
Of the one who saved your city;  
Thus his name may never perish.  
For the son—I take him henceforth,  
At the <sup>1</sup>left hand of my power;  
And the widow shall be cared for  
As befits a hero's memory."

<sup>1</sup>*Left hand*—Place of honor.





Temple of Dru-law-yieh at Lai-chow



## The Legend of Lai-chow

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So they builded up a temple,  
Stone on stone to do him honor—  
Him who won it by his life-blood,  
Even noble Dru-law-yieh.

Fair pagoda roof uprising,  
Tiled and tinted, curved and graceful,  
Called all men to come and worship  
At the shrine of Dru-law-yieh.

\* \* \* \* \*

Times are changed. The Mings are sleeping  
In their famous gilded tombs.  
Manchu hands have ruled old China  
For two hundred years and more.

Fair-faced men are coming, coming,  
And are knocking for admittance.  
“Not like <sup>1</sup>Han-men—not like <sup>2</sup>Eben,  
What their mission? Why their coming?  
Is it trade that they are wanting,  
Or the conquest of our country?”

<sup>1</sup>*Han-men*—Native Chinese.

<sup>2</sup>*Eben*—Japanese.

## **The Legend of Lai-chow**

---

Word flew all about in Lai-chow :

"He is here—the dread outsider !

He has come to build a castle

On the border of our town !"

Women fainted, water-hearted,

At the thought of dire disaster

And the ruin of the country

That would follow in his train.

Then they waited for the dread thing ;

But it came not, for the fair man

Went among them, and a woman

Walked beside him, fairer still.

Laughing children followed, closely,

Hands as white as cherry blossoms,

Cheeks like rosy, ripe pomegranates,

Sunny curls about them blowing.

Daily moved the man among them ;

All his ways were kind and gentle ;

In his smile was friendship's greeting.—

"Listen now, he speaks our language!"—

## The Legend of Lai-chow

"And we hear him saying 'brother.' "

"For the sick he has a potion,  
Wonderful to cure their suffering;  
And he stoops to wash our bodies,  
From their sores of sin and shame."

"By his side, there is no sword blade,  
But a Book he carries always;  
And he says if we will listen  
He will tell us a new story,  
Of The Man who came to save."

"New?"—"Yes, new; yet old it must be,  
For 'tis like our city's legend.  
Well we understand the meaning  
Of the one who came to save,  
Giving his life-blood a ransom  
For all those who trust his power."

Thus it comes that Yieh-hyen people,  
All about the city Lai-chow,  
One by one are turning, many,  
To the One who came to save.

## **The Legend of Lai-chow**

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In their Christian churches, often,  
Still is told the old, old story  
Of the man who saved their city—  
Fitting type of Him they trust in  
For the saving of their souls.



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